

## Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CU-02 USIE-00 SS-15 NSC-05

NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 PRS-01 SY-05

SP-02 EUR-12 /056 W

----- 108451

O 161609Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3367

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME NIACT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, NI

SUBJECT: WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS TOURNAMENT ENDS IN DISORDER

REF: LAGOS 1892 (NOTAL)

1. SHORTLY BEFORE NOON FEBRUARY 16, AS ASHE AND BOROWIAK WERE BEGINNING SECOND SET WCT SEMI-FINALS (ASHE WON FIRST SET), A MAN IN CIVILIAN DRESS, ACCOMPANIED BY AN ARMY CAPTAIN AND THREE OR FOUR ARMED SOLDIERS, STOPPED PLAY AND FORCIBLY CLEARED LAGOS LAWN TENNIS CLUB (LLTC) OF ALL SPECTATORS, OFFICIALS, AND PLAYERS. CIVILIAN LEADER OF GROUP AND ARMY CAPTAIN WERE LOUD AND ABUSIVE, AND SOLDIERS POKED GUNS IN VARIOUS RIBS AND HIT SOME SPECTATORS WITH RIFLE BUTTS. IN CONFUSED CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MOMENT, ASHE AND BOROWIAK HITCHED A RIDE TO AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE WHERE THEY HAD BEEN STAYING; ALL PLAYERS AND WCT STAFF ARE SAFE , AND NO AMERICANS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN INJURED.

1. LLTC OFFICIALS HAD NO EXPLANATIONS BUT A MILITARY OFFICERS WAS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD A GROUP OF NIGERIANS ON THE STREET OUTSIDE THE CLUB THAT HEAD OF STATE WANTED TO KNOW WHY PEOPLE WERE PLAYING TENNIS WHEN FORMER HEAD OF STATE GENERAL MUHAMMED WAS DEAD. A LLTC CLUB OFFICIAL SAID THE ARMED SOLDIERS HAD INCLUDED A CAPTAIN AMOA,  
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REPORTEDLY AIDE DE CAMP OF CHIEF OF STATE OBASANJO AND SAID TO

BE ACTING UNDER OBASANJO'S EXPRESS INSTRUCTIONS TO SHUT DOWN WCT PLAY.

3. AT ABOUT SAME TME A PEACEFUL GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY 50 MOURNERS CARRYING PICTURES OF MUHAMMED AND PLACARDS LAUDING MUHAMMED AND READING, "DIMKA THE TRAITOR", "CIA MUST GO", "BRING GOWAN BACK", "SACK NBC", ETC. WALKED PAST CHANCERY AND THEN LLTC (TWO BLOCKS DISTANT) IN APPARENTLY UNCONNECTED DEMONSTRATION.

4. COMMENT: THIS FINISHES ILL-FATED WCT TOURNAMENT, WHICH WAS INTERRUPTED BY ASSASSINATION FEBRUARY 13 AND WAS THEN REACTIVATED BY LLTC OFFICIALS WHO ASSURED AMBASSADOR AND WCT THAT MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS HAD APPROVED THE RESUMPTION, WHICH WAS ALSO ANNOUNCED ON RADIO/TV AND IN THE DAILY TIMES. PROBLEM OF DEPARTURE OF PLAYERS FROM LAGOS DESPITE CONTINUING CLOSURE OF AIRPORT MAY BE RESOLVED BY PROVISION OF NIGERIAN MILITARY PLANE TO TAKE THEM TO ACCRA, AS LLTC OFFICIAL HAD EARLIER BEEN SEEKING TO ARRANGE. MOST OF THEM HAVE PRESSING ENGAGEMENTS AND TOP-LINERS MUST PLAY TOURNAMENT IN ROME BEGINNING THURSDAY 19TH AT LATEST. ALITALIA HAS CONFIRMED NINETEEN SEATS FOR ENTIRE WCT GROUP (PLAYERS, STAFF AND PRESS) ON AZ 837 DEPARTING ACCRA 17TH 0815 ACCRA TIME (0915 LAGOS TIME) ARRIVING ROME 1435. AS OF 1600 HOURS LAGOS TIME, WE HAVE NO ASSURANCES THAT PLANE TO ACCRA WILL BE PROVIDED.

5. WE MAY HAVE POSSIBLE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS AS RESULT OF TOURNAMENT CLOSE-DOWN IF ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON FACT THAT WCT AND MOST OF PLAYERS ARE AMERICAN. IF WE ARE QUERIED ON MATTER, OUR RESPONSE WILL BE THAT PLAY WAS RESUMED AT LLTC REQUEST AND AFTER WCT HAD SOUGHT AND SECURED CATEGORIC ASSURANCES FROM LLTC OFFICIALS THAT FMG HAD SPECIFICALLY APPROVED AND AUTHORIZED RESUMPTION OF PLAY. TOURNAMENT WAS TAKING PLACE AFTER A CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE FMG AND WCT, AND LLTC OFFICIALS SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE CONTRACT BE CARRIED OUT. WE WILL REFER ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS TO LLTC FOR RESPONSE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED:

PLEASE TELEPHONE SUBSTANCE OF PARAGRAPHS 1, 2, 3 AND 4 IMMEDIATELY TO WCT HEADQUARTERS IN DALLAS. BEST CONTACT WOULD BE RON WALKER. OFFICE PHONE 214/748-5828, HOME PHONE 214/661-5221.

ASHE HAS ALREADY TELEPHONED DONALD DELL.

EASUM

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## Message Attributes

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